

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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NATIONAL MISSIONARY CONFERENCE - spotlight on evangelism in Kyodan

On November 2-3 a total of 3,100 official delegates from member churches of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan) from all over the nation gathered in two sections: one in Osaka and one in Tokyo. The theme of the Missionary Conference was "The Building Up of The Church" with emphasis on concrete plans that have been tried and have worked. In an effort to handle such large numbers the conference was divided into many discussion groups.

This was the first time that such a national conference has been held in two sections. This experiment seems to have been a success, judging both by the large attendance and by the great enthusiasm of the Conference in Osaka. In the country the Church as well as all other institutions tend to over centralize in the crowded center of Tokyo. Therefore, the obvious success of the section in Osaka serves as both a witness and a straw in the wind.

The attendance was 1,800 in Osaka as compared to only 1,300 in Tokyo. In the finances, the income in Osaka was ¥450,000 as compared to ¥250,000 in Tokyo. In fact the response to a free-will offering in Osaka was so great that ¥100,000 was left over from all expenses and will be used directly for "home evangelism".

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On the basis of information received from the U.S. Navy, it was determined
that the ship was not sighted by the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Coast Guard
on the date of the disappearance. The ship was last seen on the
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date of the disappearance.

The handling of the divisions into discussion groups seems to have gone better in Osaka because of the many subdivisions and thus the chance for greater participation by all concerned.

OKINAWAN LAND PROBLEM - an international Christian representation to Congressional investigating Committee

In response to a request from the United Church in Okinawa and Christian Missionaries there the Rev. Darley Downs went from Japan to Okinawa to testify before the visiting Congressional sub-committee investigating the controversial Okinawa land problem. The request was sent to the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Far Eastern Joint Office. They, through their member missionary boards asked Mr. Downs to come. Rev. Darley Downs is a missionary to the United Church of Christ in Japan and has had more than thirty years of experience in working with Japanese speaking people.

After investigating the situation he said in his testimony to the sub-committee in part: "I cannot escape for feeling that there has been a strong disposition to acquire the land considered necessary for military purposes at the smallest possible expense to the American taxpayer. This is sound general financial policy; but... in this case we are out to get something much more precious than the right to use 40,000 acres of land. Basically we are out...to demonstrate to the world, Asia, Japan and Okinawa that America stands for liberty, democracy, human dignity and the basic human rights set forth in the Bill of Rights in our Constitution. I fear the handling of the Okinawa land problem, so far, has done much to hinder the achievement of this basic objective. ...Readers of Mrs. Buck's 'Good Earth' have some understanding of the Oriental attitude to land.....Granted that stern necessity demands for many, separation from their land, is there no obligation to insure that at least approximately equivalent substitute land be provided?Farmers are after all the most important citizens any nation has. These families are the innocent victims of what is believed to be military necessity. Surely Christian America wants them to be treated fairly and generously, as our own people are when public works require displacement, even if it costs a lot of money....."

The visit and efforts of Rev. Darley Downs was noted with great interest and appreciation by the Okinawan newspapers. His coming and his testimony were reported in 12 or 13 different issues. His parting statement to the Press said in part: "I have been much surprised at the space the Naha press has given to me. It is, I believe, evidence that the Okinawan people appreciate the sympathetic concern of American Christians for the sacrifices of their farmers for the creation of the military base needed for the protection of democracy, independence, and liberty as well in Asia as in the West.Okinawa's case has been heard. I earnestly hope the people will quietly wait for the result....Nothing could more surely end all hope of favorable consideration of this problem than to have the displaced farmers or their friends ask or accept Communist support.They always seek out people with grievances and

offer help which they cannot actually give.Progress is being made. I earnestly hope it may be advanced by self-restraint and patient observance of regulations by the Okinawan people."

Surely here is an occasion in which Christianity shows its truly supra-national character through seeking understanding and mutual reconciliation between peoples.

PRISON EVANGELISTS ORGANIZE - national association

During the National Mission Conference of the United Church of Christ (see page 1), those pastors interested in prison Evangelism were called together to discuss ways of best carrying on their work. Including those in both sections of the conference, 60 ministers met together. They decided to recommend to the Executive Committee of the United Church that a new committee called the Special Committee for Prison Evangelism be formed. This Committee in turn will sponsor a United Church Ministers Prison Evangelism Association. It is estimated that about one hundred ministers in the United Church are now actively engaged in this form of evangelism.

The Committee will also work for interdenominational cooperation, especially in seeking ways to make possible the continuation of this important kind of evangelism. Right now there is an urgent need for an organized opposition to a dangerous trend back to the pre-war system whereby only officially appointed prison chaplains would be allowed to be the spiritual counsellors of prison inmates. These chaplains would in all probability be mostly Buddhist. Under this system before the end of the war the inmates were required to bow before the prominently displayed Buddhist and Shinto symbols, and Christian ministers did not have free entrance to the prisons.

Although individual ministers have been trying to prevent this swing back toward the "old way" by appealing to the right of freedom of religion guaranteed under the new post-war constitution, there has been no organized group at work on this problem. Therefore, one of the first concerns of this newly organized groups will be to assure their continued access to the almost 10,000 prison inmates who are actively studying Christianity.

STEWARDSHIP AMONG LUTHERANS - self support gains support

Additional plans to encourage self support among the member churches of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church have recently been made (for others see JCAN #69 10/1/55 p.4). In the past, even self supporting congregations received funds for the repair of church buildings. However henceforth, these churches may only borrow this money when necessary and are thus being urged to take care of their own building upkeep costs completely.

Another plan now under study would have all congregations pay for the building of their own church buildings. The plan

calls for a central revolving fund from which congregations could borrow what was necessary to complete their buildings and repay at fixed rates. However, this plan seems too advanced to some in the Church and it is still undergoing study.

About 30% of the total operating budget of the JEIC (excluding non-recurring items and institutional budgets) is now being paid for by money raised here in Japan.

THEIR MAJESTIES AND THE ORPHANS - of warm human contact

On the 31st of October the Emperor and Empress visited the Elizabeth Saunders Home, an orphanage for children of mixed parentage. Usually such occasions run with the formality of a rigidly fixed schedule. But after the various class and living rooms had been duly visited, some of the children gathered around Her Majesty; one pointed to her sable neck piece and asked what it was. Others began to stroke and pull at it arguing whether it was a fox or what. Their Majesties were so warmed by the informal friendliness of the Home that their visit was prolonged a few minutes beyond the scheduled time.

Such informality and intimate contact of the titular ruler of this country with the people was completely unthinkable before the end of the war. Until then, even the passing of the Imperial train or car was an occasion of such serious import that all heads were bowed and not even the most curious child was allowed to raise his eyes to look. This contact between innocently interested and friendly children and Their Imperial Majesties may be taken as a symbol of the changing role that Their Majesties have found in the lives and the hearts of this nation since the war.

The Elizabeth Saunders Home is an orphanage exclusively for the children of mixed parentage who were abandoned by their mothers in such great numbers in the first desperate post war years. Especially in the early post war years when a woman could be bought literally for a loaf of bread, these unwanted offspring were found in large numbers. At that time, eight years ago, Mrs. Sawada, wife of Renzo Sawada who was the former unofficial observer at the U.N.O. for Japan, started this Home. Mrs. Sawada who is a member of the Seikokai (Anglican Church in Japan), used her father's country estate at Oiso for this Home. Some of the money for the project came from interested friends in Japan and some from friends overseas. She has been to North America to lecture on and collect money for this work. When her husband was the Ambassador to England before the war she saw the Bernard Home there and received a lastingly deep impression which served as the inspiration for this present Home.

Unlike most orphanages in this country, The Elizabeth Saunders Home does not put its children in public schools but sends them to the school of the Home called St. Stephan's School. This is done in an effort to overcome some of the ill effects of the stigma of

being an "ainoko" (lit. "a child of mixed blood"). This home, located at Oiso which is an hour from Tokyo, has had 364 children to enter it but there are only 123 there at present. The others have been adopted here and abroad. Sixty seven have been adopted by parents in America.

STREET PREACHING BY CELEBRITIES - "I am not ashamed of the Gospel"

On the first of this month what may seem like a motley group gathered beside one of the busiest stations in Tokyo. Among them were a prizefighter, a prominent politician, a world famous writer, and a brass band. What brought these people together? The chance to witness to their Lord and Savior!

In preparation for the National Missionary Conference on the following two days in Tokyo, the United Church of Christ sponsored this outdoor evangelistic meeting in a public square beside Shinbashi Station. This is the center of one of the busiest night club amusement centers in the City. Here, while people thronged home from work and out for amusement, over 1,500 stopped to hear the personal witness of these celebrities to the faith in Jesus Christ which has brought them from death to life.

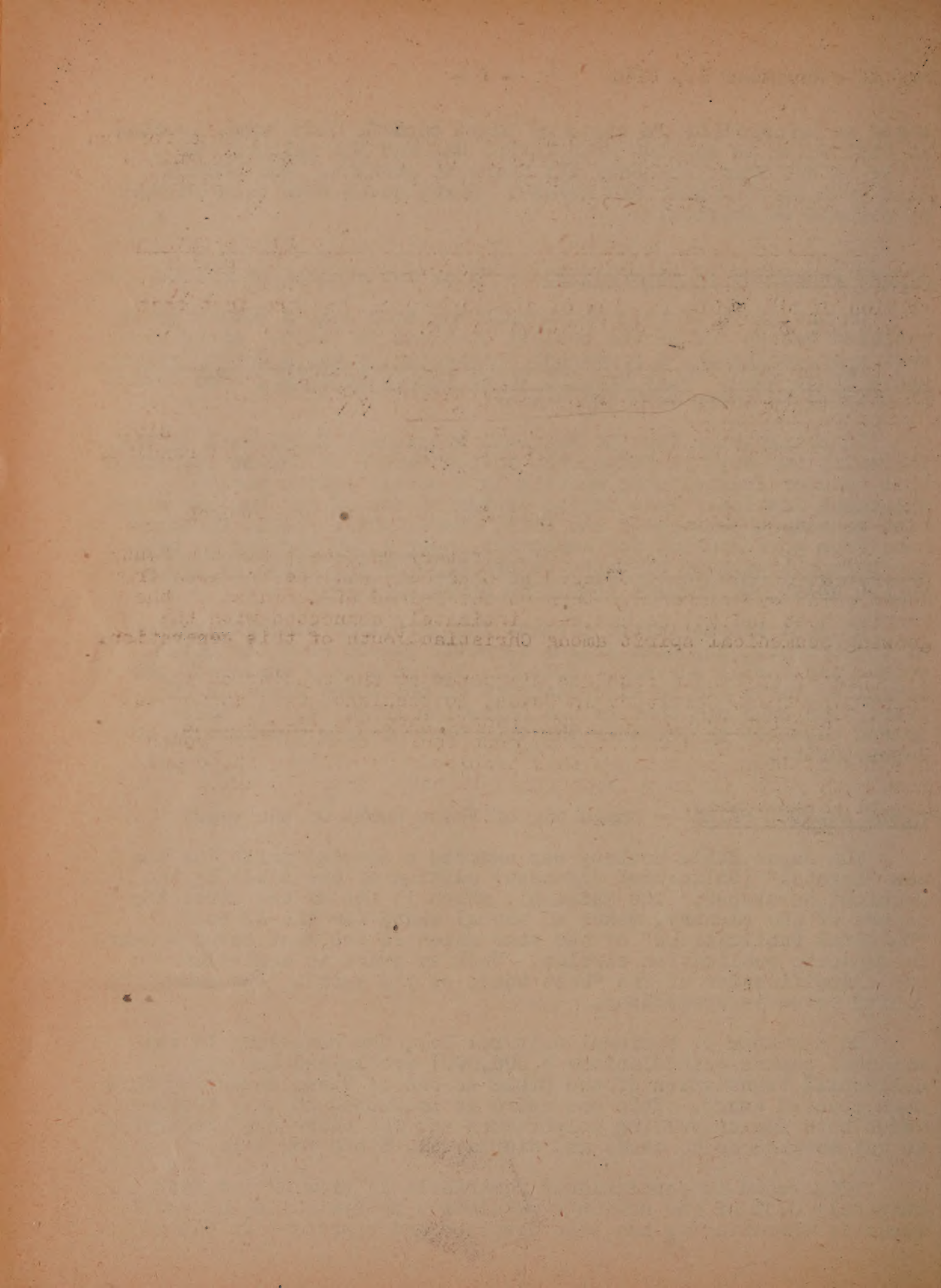
Shigeji Kaneko is the present featherweight boxing champion of the Orient. Toyohiko Kagawa is world famous as a Christian writer and social servant. Motojiro Sugiyama is a member of the Socialist Party and is Vice Chairman of the Lower House in the Diet. The Band was that of the Salvation Army. All of these joined together to proclaim the Good News of life everlasting in Jesus Christ.

BIBLE AWARDED PRIZE - named one of "best books of the year"

The Japan Bible Society was awarded a special prize for the new "Kogotai" (Colloquial Japanese) edition of the Bible by the Mainichi Newspaper. The Mainichi, which is one of the three top papers of the country, makes an annual award for the 12 top "Cultural Publications" of the year which is the most coveted award in Japanese publication circles. Such an award is equivalent to the classification of the "best books of the year". The publicity value is tremendous.

On November 3, National Cultural Day, the headlines in the Mainichi papers (circulation: 3,000,000) proclaimed the new colloquial translation of the Bible as one of those deserving this much coveted award. This one award is predicted to have tremendous value both for travelling colporteurs and for those who are trying to get bookstores to carry and display the Bible for sale.

This award is particularly remarkable in view of the fact that only 0.5% of the nation's population is Christian and until recently Christianity has been despized and oppressed as being a



foreign religion. The Bible has been generally considered a foreign book with little relevance to Japan. Thus, this award recognizes the Bible as being a Japanese book and one that has significance for the people of this nation.

Over 20,000 books covering every phase of life in the nation were submitted for this contest and 12 were chosen. A special award in every way equal to the top awards was created for this edition of the Bible in view of its large size and the fact that it was not written for publication in the usual sense.

Last spring this edition received another award: it was selected by the National Library Association as one of its "recommended books". This means that its 3000 member libraries all over the nation will be urged to put this edition of the Bible along with other books for special display and recommended reading.

POTTER VISITS JAPAN YOUTH - ambassador of ecumenical Church

The Rev. Philip Potter, the Secretary in Geneva for the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches, will be in Japan from November 15 - December 2. Born on the island of Dominica of the British West Indies, he has been intimately connected with the growing ecumenical spirit among Christian Youth of this generation.

One of the major problems discussed at the meeting of the Youth Department Committee in Davos, Switzerland, this summer was that of the integration of young people into the life of the Church. Mr. Potter would like an opportunity to meet with youth leaders in Japan to discuss this problem. He will speak to and meet with youth in Tokyo, Doshisha, Kwansei Gakuin, Osaka, Nagoya and Yokohama.

